

BEXHILL-ON-SEA

**It's Beginning,
the People & District.**

MR. & MRS. A. HUMPHREYS
4 MULBERRY CLOSE
LITTLE COMMON
BEXHILL ON SEA
EAST SUSSEX
TN39 4RX



Contents

	Page
Hooe Village ...	1
Catsfield	2
Not Above Thirty Houses	3
Bexhill Down	3
Way Of Life ...	4
Building Bexhill	11
Brickyards	13
St. Barnabas Church	14
The First Hotel	15
The Town Hall	16
Fire Engines ...	16
Water Supplies	21
George Sargent	22
East Parade	29
The Lost Cementry	30
Amusements ...	30
Cooden's Lucky Day	35

BEXHILL MUSEUM

Please do not remove this item from the Access Centre
Please handle with care

By H. G. CAREY

For the past Seventy years, I have seen Bexhill grow to it's present widespread size. But to relate my story, I have to tell you what I've been told by my parents. First, my Great grandfather was a Hooe man, his occupation was then called a Bricklayer Journeyman, I don't wonder at it, they had to walk to all places. This was at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century. It was he who built the little Stone Cottages in Little Common Road. He must have been a Religious sort of man. When they were going over the Records of Hooe Church, (Vestry Books) this was Years later, they came across an account from Peter Carey for the year ending March 1838.

This was in a Vellum covered book 7½in.×6in. As records of Vestry Meetings held from April 10th 1813 to May 22nd 1823 loose in the book was Peter Carey's account for £6-10s.-0d. for teaching in Sunday School the year 1838. And a receipt for 2s. 8d. for four years quitrent for lands holden of the manor of Hooe, due at Michaelmas 1769 from the Church Wardens, and paid April 4th 1768.

The Vestry was generally held at the Red Lion Inn and was attended by six or more inhabitants.

It also met at the Poor House.

The business concerned the relics of the Poor.

The assessment of lands.

The amount of the Poor Rate, and the expenditure of the money.

In 1813 the Rate was 2s. 6d. in the Pound and rose to 5s. 0d. agreements were made of one year only, from Lady Day to Lady Day. The Parish undertook to clothe the children, sometimes also to contribute towards their maintenance, sometimes the guardians or employers paid the Parish.

To house the Poor, cottages were rented in addition to the Parish Workhouse, or Poor House.

On Lady Day 1817 it was resolved, no longer to rent cottages, and on April 3rd 1820, the Poor in the Workhouse were to be put out to be maintained and clothed for two years.

At the time the accommodation at the Poor House was probably insufficient, possibly re-building was required, in 1822 a vestry was held at the Red Lion, as to hiring £600 of which £300 was for a new part of the poorhouse, and another £300 for building a little Barn and fencing around the Common. Sixteen residents signed this agreement to pay off £50 each Lady Day until the £600 is paid off.

In some cases guardians received 3d. or 6d. per day or weekly allowances ranging from 1s. to 5s. to board and lodge and to wash and mend the Parish clothing in others. Extraordinary items of expenditure, the purchase of a fat hog for 2s. 6d. The advance of 3s. per week for thirteen weeks to a woman to bear her expenses to Germany in 1813 Richard Webb undertook to govern the poor in the Workhouse, and to work on the Farm as ordered to do.

Beef was supplied to the workhouse at 6s. per stone.

No Use to the Parish

On July 31st 1814 it was agreed that William Clapson will never be of any use to the Parish, and that means shall be used to get rid of him. Harriett Clapson was boarded, Ann Willsher and Charlotte were taken by Tos. Darby, the paying of 1s. 3d. per week. Fanny went to Sedlescombe, and 1s. 6d. per week Ellen Clapson went to Hastings.

In 1817 the vestry agreed that cattle found and feeding on the roads should be compounded and released on payment of charges as follows. Horse 2s., Cow 2s., Donkey 1s., Hog 1s.

HOUSEHOLD GOODS 1822

Benjamin Blackman and Joseph Turner will have the management of Parish goods Six lists of Household goods, which had been the Property of the people. Among them are Feather Beds which were common, other beds were of Chaff. Pairs of Pots, Pothooks, Porridge Pots, Gridirons, Nest cases of Shelves, Warming Pans, Corner Cupboards, Brand Irons, A Flail, a Flour Tub, Keelers (Shallow tub, a Powdering tub). Bellows, Window Shutters, a Cheese Toaster, Tee yard, and Tinder Box.

To Catsfield 1862

Peter Carey's son Peter, he married the Hooe girl Hester Morris, and they moved to a nice house in Catsfield called Spring Cottage. There were four sons of the marriage. Peter, Tom, George and our father Ben being the youngest.

No Piped Water

When they were young boys, Ben and Tom had got some Fish by a nearby stream, had them a few days and they turned bad. But this did not stop them playing fishing with them in the Spring. Now this was the only Village Water Supply, and the sump hole at the spring where they dipped their buckets in had been badly tainted by rotten stinking fish, swished about by the young Carey's, for the next few weeks they were not very popular.

The Normanhurst

This was the best thing to happen at Catsfield, and it provided a great deal of work, especially for our Grandfather, he worked on the large house from start to finish, and he like any father knew well of the Brassey's.

Like all large properties, costly to maintain and beyond repair, have been taken down. Catsfield sported a fine pack of *Fox-hounds*.

The Parish Church and another Church

Why two in a small community. About a Century ago, two Religious Gentlemen could not agree, they never fought or used wicked words, but one used his money to show his power of authority, he built a new church with a tall steeple to the Village. This would and must be seen by all going to the old church. A sort of acknowledgement, Im right, I've won, his pinnacle of success.

The White Hart

The Landlord of the Pub at this time was a man named Frank Slough, beside looking after the Pub he was an in between Blacksmith, mostly he was good at was making iron tools.

The Countess Brassey

On the death of the first Lady Brassey, it was essential to have all the horses for the Coaches to be black, these at the time could not be found, this was resolved by dyeing two horses black with soot, unfortunately on the day of the Funeral, it poured cats and dogs, and before the Ceremony was through the dye dripped off the horses, to the sniggering of the lads, and horses were back to their brown colour, but all went off solemnly.

Not above thirty houses

From Catsfield, there was another move, to an old cottage in Water Mill Lane, by the old Watermill, its working days were finished, work prospects there were not bright, and a final move was made. This between Sidley and the Old Town called the Honnies, there four cottages stood, and they moved into one, now No. 21 Springfield Road.

At this time there was not above thirty houses in the area of Bexhill to be. You could easily count them in Sidley. The oldest my dad thought was the little black cottages round the Black Lane (Glover's Lane). The thatched Cottage next to where the Sussex Hotel S.E. side cottage by Brickyard, and Blacksmith Cottage, not forgetting New Inn, and old Burnt House, and one back of the New Inn what old Charley Footner lived in.

There was some half timber and some all timber cottages about half dozen at Belle Hill, and the Queen's Head, an old cottage where Stone Mason's yard was, now the Fire Station, a cottage corner Broadoak Lane, it's still there but young Tom Mason has re-dressed it so it's been hidden, one at what we call Dunk's Corner, Gunters Lane and one at No. 1.

You could not miss Hoads Mill, but sadly only the centre post remains, im sure Cliff will not mind me repeating what he told, and my association with the Mill.

It was made in Oak and Apple wood, and formed in seventeen thirty five, was taken over in Eighteen fifty five by Hoads grandfather, so our Grandfathers must have met in those far off and isolated times, because this was the year when our Grandfather Nelson Dyer married Lucy Ann Smith, 1850, at Popes Cottages, Galley Hill. This I cannot be sure, but I think that our Great Grandfather, Michael Dyer, were married at St. Peter's church in 1806 lived here.

I still marvel about the old Mill spinning round with Joe Lenard the Miller man always covered in flour dust, I've been many times in the mill when she's been rumbling away the round grindstones churning turning, the coarse and fine sieves shaking to and fro, I am pleased that I was the last person to go over the top of the roof to fix new boards and to climb up a sixty rung ladder holding fourteen foot boards on a quiet day, the wind was that strong, it was enough to blow your hat off, I nearly took off with the board.

Bexhill Downs

Near King Offa School there was a small cottage, and a woman Mrs. Smith lived in it, my dad would take her in *bad times* a hot bowl of soup, and there were plenty of times. There was old Ben Eastwood's cottage and meadow in Eastwood Road. (Then Braggs Lane).

The Poplar Trees

The Poplar Trees that practically circle the Bexhill Down were planted by Uncle George, also a work mate was with him. If only he could come back now and see all the White Pollen showering down from the trees, it was as if it had been snowing, he could never believe it could happen. He also planted the Horse Chestnuts in the Collington Rise, always to be admired.

My School Days

Old Cherry Harmer, and his young mate looked after the Common. Fred Honisett, whose father was one of the last Coast Guards, they had no machines to do the hard work in those days, and a clip round the ear off Cherry if he caught you up to something.

Mr. Noakes lived in a tumbledown house at the bottom of where Willingdon Ave. is, and the stone cottages up the Denbigh Hill, can't forget them because our granddad built them.

Nelson Dyer — Pope's Cottages

Old Nelson was born 1831, when they were married, him and Lucy Smith in 1850, they lived in the middle one of three cottages on top of Galley Hill, they faced the South East, just a little off, where afterward there was six coastguard cottages built, these I knew quite well, because one winter I had the work of repairs to slate roofs, old Cocket's daughter lived in one, the coastguards were finished, and the three cottages were either pulled or tumbled down, only the brick and hardcore remained, that was fifty years ago. Also a house, it was near the cliff edge, it was gone then much earlier and this one over the years, tumbled down and rolled into the sea. There was a family of eight, and our mother Helen Jane was the youngest, there Sarah married Jack Plummer. I remember Uncle Jack, he used to ride a three wheeled tricycle, when he came over to see us, which was quite often, on a Sunday, he had pleasure boats at Hastings, he was also Coxswain of the Lifeboat this would be about 1912 period.

Coal Dump House, Sea Road

Our Father will remember when the Coastal Bargers plied their goods, mainly out from Lewes and Newhaven, and when they used to dump coal and make a Dump of it, that's how they described it, and about 1885 a big demand for Blue Lias knob Lime. A house was mentioned at the dump, that was at the bottom of Sea Lane, which was no more than a rough beach track made with broken stones, it was then open country, and our father will remember when the Polegrove was marsh land with tall reeds growing, this would be about 1885, later bullocks were put out there to graze, later still our Council used for a refuse tip, filled it to the present level, and is now our sports field. There were a few farmsteads around.

Way of life

Times were very hard in those days of 1850 to 1885, but happy, they thought little of walking miles for work, our Mother worked in the Bull Inn ten years old a century ago, just for a few pence a week, it's a pity we've lost her school pay book, where she had to pay 1d. a week.

Mother had four brothers, Tom, Jim, Albert and Friend, although winter seemed to be hard and money short, you could be sure they never went hungry. (No Social Security then!) There was always some flour about and fruit. Their meals were good and wholesome. The pies were blackberry and apple, dates and apple, prune, (take out stones) and bread pudding. There was plenty of poorman's meat, rabbit, hares, young pigeons, thrush, blackbirds, snipe, ducks eggs, plovers, partridge, duck and chicken. The stew pot was nearly always on the go, nearly at all seasons fruit could be had from the farmsteads and pork if they had the money.

Fishing and Netting

They used to have a Clap net for birds, two long sticks about six feet, curved at the top, like an arch, with one inch mesh net fixed to each pole, about a man's open arms width, then at dusk one person would go one side of hedge and flush and beat the bush, while the other would be the other side of the hedge with arms outstretched, when the birds flew, he would clap the net together, and would select the best of his capture.

The foreshore, well, they virtually had it all to themselves, it was lovely, clean and salty fresh, plenty of shrimps and prawns, which they were pretty good at with spoon net and occasional lobster. In weather permitting, they would use their drag net, two inch square mesh, approximately six feet deep and roughly about twenty five yards long, one would be each end, would drag in waist deep, in a circle, and back on to the sand, this would be at low water, then to see what was caught in each drag, sometimes no fish, and only seaweed. The net would have at spaces, lead weights on bottom line, with cork floats on top.

Shop

I understood, the stores in the High Street, which we later know as Cave Austins, they never bought cakes. It used to be jam tarts with home made jams and marmalades. Mostly on a plate cooked, the treacle, and jam tart, you could cut and come again off the tin plate, it was so good. The cake they went in for caraway seed and date mostly. Our mother followed the same old ways, not forgetting the baked spuds, when the oven was hot. We still follow the same mode of living because with think it's the best. The cook of the day was Mrs Beeton. We still have the second edition 1922. The Christmas Puds were made middle November to same recipes, but our old folk could not afford all the nice treats she put in the book, but they had the most seasonable ones they could obtain.

Roads to Little Common

Up the hill close to Denbeigh were the stone cottages, on the other side of road up a drive was Hurchington Manor, this later became known as Topper Cruttenden's Farm, he went broke because he had the contract to Horse and Cart Refuse to the tip which then was up at Clinch Green. This was the time when the first dust motor lorry came about, and poor old Topper was left with a stable full of Shire horses, he did not know what to do with.

There was Morley's Tea Garden and House. Just a little way up from Sutherland Ave., the chicken could wander across the road, at their leisure, and lay their eggs on the Down in the bushes.



Thomas Nelson Dyer 1831-1915

Pevensey Marshes Keeper

This was managed by the Parks family of Barnhorn Cottages, Fred the last to manage, another pleasant character was Mrs de Winton. There was the Denbeigh Pub, Tom Lades old cottage, then Kewhurst Manor. Then down Church Hill to a row of Cottages on the left side, I remember Old Bill Smith's butchers shop with the lovely black cherry tree and cherries hanging over the garden wall.

All these were knocked down and cleared, this was in nineteen thirty two the year, the Barnhorn, Pevensey Road was made. The Barnhorn Manor, (Lower Barnhorn Farm) now so called has been in existence for a number of years, could be six hundred. A man named Mr Shoreland, just after the war 1947, and he was over inquisitive kind of chap, I recall, he got me to remove the fireplace to see what there was behind it. I started and his curiosity grew deeper and deeper as I took the fireplace out, one after another, finally coming to the original, which was an oven type and large iron door, it filled two lorry loads of rubble to clear, my guess was they would have a fire at back and put their baking in the front, shut the iron door and leave to cook, by their judgement of firing.

When the new butcher's shop was being built a new Litch-gate was being built at the St Marks Church, Little Common, and to go the other via Collington Lane, you would pass Down Cott, Mrs V. G. Jones, her father owned the large meadow, and a few nice properties in the Lane. The field is now a private housing estate, but most interesting to me was Blacksmith Forge, up to the left hand side end of the first oldest houses.

The Forge

Old Knobby Stevens would be Mrs Eileen Baker's grandfather, pity he wasn't to know, because the good Lady was our Mayoress. I well remember Old Knobby Stevens working there for George Shoesmith the Belle Hill Contractor (Cartage). Old Knobby was a Wheelwright and Laddermaker, well he could make nearly anything. When I did jobs for Mrs V. G. and I had to go in the Forge this would be fifty years later, she would beg me not to disturb a thing, as this was her father's wish. I understand there is and I'm pleased to say, a Preservation order placed upon it. The Old House named The Squirrels, and Collington Manor, the home of Daniel Meyer one of our Councillors which had the pond across the road opposite with the Swans, who acted as if they owned the Pond, the horses on the Highways needed a drink sometimes. Further down the road was a wood-boarded cottage, old Sargent he lived in it, and was the Gardener at the Manor. It was well wooded each side of the road then, time of first World War.

You then came to and pass Collington Rise, and in mentioning that, our Uncle George planted Horse Chestnut Trees up the Rise, but many years earlier.

On to the house called The Pages, and Old Johnny Webb lived there, I believed he built it, I knew the old so and so, he used to stand in the track that led into the Barnuns, my brother Tom and I used to go that way, it cut across, and you could come out pretty well anywhere, by the Cooden Car Park, Withyham Wood, but we would make for the Cooden Camp, come out about where the Convalescent Home is now.

Johnny Webb — The Pages

Old Johnny Webb he done a lot for Bexhill in his working life, the Park he laid out, he built some houses. The Beach Haven in Sea Road was one, as a workman I altered it into a Bridge Club, that was about fifty years ago, for his son young Johnny, old Bob Hammond looked after his Shire horses. Old Webb also built some houses in the Wickham Ave. area, made up with concrete blocks. Jumbo Hall, Fred's father it was, I use to go down the Sea the Flagstaff way, that was across the track, that is now Richmond Road. I'd be about ten then 1918-19, an old army hut was in the field and Jumbo would be making concrete blocks. Webb also built the Sea Wall, they call the Bastion, was unsafe and the Engineers blew it up one Saturday about midday. Shook the whole place, but there was no houses then, this was at the end of West Parade, the old wall laid for years on the Beach. Could be now, some of it. He would pay old Jumbo Adams on a Friday night in the Devonshire Pub very often.

You could go to the Camp, and scrounge anything that was going in the food line, this would be 1916 17 the Royal Garrison Artillery were stationed there, things were rationed, old Johnny Webb, I can see him now in my minds eye, he would stand in the Track, short Breeches and leggings with his tummy showing up well, holding a double barrelled gun and saying you can't come across here, but it took more than Johnny to stop us. I was too young to think then, but I know now he was a good man. Well when you turned the corner, you came to White Lodge, when I lived in the Lane Mr Mappin the noted jeweller and his daughter lived there, but in the first War years old Mr Thomas in Celon Cottage had a small holding and he used to bring the milk around in a milk bucket all hot, and you would buy the quantity you wanted straight into your jug.

Again on to what was to become my cottage, Birchingtons, it used to be Birchington Farm cottage there many years ago, part wall of farm can still be seen, sorry its all been pulled down, Old Bunny Unsted lived in the cottage when he was a boy, that's him in the photograph, Whip boy or lead boy leading the six Oxen team, ploughing the field west side of Collington Wood, later was a football field, now all houses.

Now down to Cackle Corner, and round the Village, but up Cooden Sea Road first, there was old Strawberry Cottages, Miss Bates lived there, with a Policeman's truncheon hanging on her bed just in case.

Old Bill Gilham, work shop to think of the magnificent schools they built, there was Seefield, Copland Bros. Masters, Effingham House, The Howards, then Miss Onslow, Falconbury, used to be St Wilfreds got burnt down, re-built and named after owner Mr Faulkner — Faulknbury, they are all gone, sadly, it was lovely to see the school children on Sundays always at their best in their best, on the march to service at St Marks. Only Lake House remains of those schools, it was mastered by a Mr Williams.

The oldest houses in and around the Village I think would be New Jansi, now gone, Peach Cottage, Strawberry Cottage, Kiln Bank 1 and 2, the little cottage just below where Old Jessie Mott lived, then one in Green Lane and Hive cottage very small, old Harry Ford lived there, (John Bull he was, on Carnival days).



Oxen ploughing field west side Collington Wood. Bumny Unsted the Whip or lead boy.

Elliotts Store, a weather board Grocery shop facing south west, now down and a block of flats in its place.

A row of slate roof, ground floor dwellings, old Frank Cheal butted his shop on to them. An old house next to Frank Walters shop, in his house that's what it used to be, a Mr Medhurst had a boot repair business at the side window in Peartree Lane before they used to bake the Village bread.

High Peartree cottage top of the hill, what fruitfull names they gave in those days. I must not forget Ocklinge and Mr Hurst, with a replica of Herstmonceux Castle surrounded by a moat and all the baby frogs crossing the road, and the old toad keeping us awake in the early summer evenings, we lived nearby opposite then in Kiln Bank. There were no houses from the village down to us then.

Streamsider was there, and the Freemans, old Albert Freeman he managed Cooden Farm in earlier days.

Another old character was Bill Duke, he ran the grocery shop where Hills is, and in those days they had not heard of fridges, and old Bill would put a side of bacon partly down the well for keeping cool, but he was seen by troops who were stationed in Cooden, when old Bill went to get it after a couple of days, there it was gone.

They used to hold the Bonfire 5th Nov. in the field by the Pond, middle of field south of Churchill Ave., later as now Cooden Mt. Wally Smith I think lived in an old house in Kennel Lane and the Kennel Man was Carey Withenden, a little before my time, but I knew him OK.

The Wheelwright

Yes, it was old George Dix, and his son young Reg. He had a large wooden hut on some clear land, it would be where the Wine shop is now, in the Village, if you wanted a new wheel, George would soon put one together for you, or any repair to cart, and there would be plenty in his hey day, and old Crocker the Smithy would soon knock a ring of metal with punch holes, so he could set the wooden hub, and spokes and wood rim to it.

Or he would re-make any wheel for you. Another fill in job would be to make wooden wheel-barrows or ladders.

Then at the time Mrs Stapley, she had a small hut and stand, she was the Village Greengrocer.

Herbert Isted, he was the man who managed as House Agents, nice properties at around five to six hundred pounds.

Oldest Builders

Bill Greed the local builder, his father old Bill, we say, built the first Council Houses in the Village, that was 1922-3, I worked for him then, and I am pleased to say that young Bill is the oldest in the Town building business to carry the family trade on.

I must say that the Gillham family were the big Builders beginning of the century, I think of the art and workmanship that went into the large buildings and schools they built. Ralf Gillham's father, he was young Fred's grandfather, I knew the old boy well, we paid him ten bob a week for the cottage, if there was a gap in the boundary hedge he would bring up a young sapling of hawthorn and plant, he told me it had been in the family, Birchington cottage two hundred years, I

honestly believed him, I would think it would be at least four hundred years old, it was built to last, every bit of timber was oak, including the weather-boarding, which was painted yellow, it is reckoned you cannot paint oak (to paint new is true) but it was probably done after a couple hundred years when it was sap bone dry. I reckon the oak would have been cut at the old saw pits, Ninfield which would have been the centre of forest country, and the nails what few were used with the wrought iron tie brackets would no doubt come from the old iron works at Lewes. I judge the age from the worn floor paving bricks, laid on Pea Beach, normally two inches thick in the walks around furniture, lots had worn down to barely three quarters of an inch, and to drive a nail into the boarding, it would bend it, it was so hard.

I have, because the sole timbers had no damp course, I re-built the outside, by encasing the whole structure including the boarding in a jacket of brickwork, as the base was rotting and unstable.

Birching Cottage 1 and 2

Old Mr Gillham told me, of which I could see, our cottage stood on its own, with a small dairy out the back, close to back door, and the well, the dairy was approximately thirteen feet by eight, and built with lime and small beach, concrete, many walls were built like this, the front boundary still stands to this day.

His family built No 2 on to the existing and it cost then fifty pounds.

Lake House School

This was built for Mr Bond Councillor, he had Grange Court School, now down (and an estate built). He left Grange School, and had the new school, Lake House, built which my father had happy memories, working from start to finish, and Mr Bond was happy to play cricket with the men in their lunch hour. He was Mayor for a time.

Paraffin Lill

Yes, Old Lill lived in Whydown, she had a little box two wheeled push cart, she had a regular round about the Village, the cart would carry a drum of Paraffin and spare cans and would make her call each week pretty regular, wet or snowing.

One marvels at one's struggle to make a living, poor Lill could have only made a few shillings a week, and the miles she trudged, week after week, after all it meant walking to and from Whydown every day in all weathers, it was mainly a winter-time trade.

Building — Bexhill-on-Sea

It was about 1880 when the family moved to Springfield Road up the Honnies, and our grandfather, he was a devout Churchman, so much so, he would preach, and in the Springfield Road church, would very often take the service.

This Methodist Church, and the first houses, were the first branch of the Parish of St Peter, to lead out into what is to come Bexhill on Sea, it was the only other church, the next oldest to St Peters.

First road of houses

It was about 1885 this time when the town started to get its centre and the first road of houses to be built and named was called Cornwall Road, these were formed in a terrace style, ground and first floor with attic rooms in roof.

Second road of houses

Then followed Devonshire Road, this was to be a more ambitious venture, it was to be at the time the main road for shops, after the shops the road was made with a surface of wood blocks, and wide pavements. Then came the building of Sackville Road, we are reminded of this, it was only last December, that our cousin Minnie passed away in her eighty eighth year, her father Jim when they were building corner Wickham Ave., and Sackville Road, fell off and was killed, we don't wonder at it, because he suffered apoplexy, and in those days you worked or went without.

Western Road

Western Road followed the same type of houses as Cornwall Road. I'm sure they never anticipated the rapid growth of the town, Bexhill-on-Sea was now being built, and a second row of shops, I think was not planned. Lots of folk will remember Teddy Wrights Dining Rooms, one shilling for a dinner enough to suffice any Navvy. Sixty years ago, my father and I had the job of alterations, and making them into shops. This was for Mr Godwin, Jim and Ben their fathers firm and led me to believe houses they were from the beginning, and as the town was gradually expanding, roads of houses, as to the nature of the land, it was found to build up to floor levels, or to form basements in others.

I did start to talk about the Cabby complete with Top Hat, well it was Old Tom Smith, he had a riding school, yes in Western Road, where there is now a private Car Park. He had the school in his early days, and then in later years he donned Top Hat and drove his carriages, I could just remember him, but not Thomas the builder, it was his builders yard, later Hall and Co Builders Merchants, Paine and Rogers down lower were the fruit and vegetable wholesalers, and Dengates had the Dining Room still lower down by the Co-op now. A Mr Deeprose had the main green grocers in Sackville road, and Mr Hughes butchers with Richardsons the first Ladies Hair Salon. I must not forget the time, Chissel Watch repairs.

While the houses were under construction, there was a very bad spell of weather, wintry, and the chaps were keeping themselves warm, like they used to do in winter, and that was to burn all the spare bits of wood, but the bad weather continued, and that was all gone, it took a large amount of wood lathes for a house in those times, they would counter batten, lathe the outside walls, they being solid together, ceilings and partitions quite a quantity, but they all went on the fire, then the sack they got, as well as them going up to Devonshire Pub.

There was the time when my old chap went round the back behind the houses about where Hall & Co later had a shop and depot, he heard a lot of calling, and went and looked down the well. The well sinker was digging. His mate had gone off in the Devonshire pub for two hours and left him down the bottom of the well a shouting his head off, he was lucky to be pulled up then on a donkey winch.

Brickyards

You cannot build houses without bricks, and these gradually came about where the clay land was suitable, plus a little sand, and there was quite a few sand pits, it was quite common when sites were developed they would find sand and use it, but it was of poor quality locally.

The brickyards to our recollection are Adams of Sidley with yard for coal as merchants, Goldsmiths top of Peartree Lane, Spiers yard brickworks Ashburnham. And in Terminus Ave., all trace lost, also Ashdown Road (Western Rd continued) Pudner Baker was the first to make bricks here. Stephen Carey yard in Broadoak Lane, Jack Farnfield was an old time brickmaker, can't think of his yard. The last one I recall was White Bros in St Mary's Lane. It was Jumbo Adams and Bill Elliott who worked there, Bill is still in the town.

These were made in clamps, hence the name clamp bricks, most merchants call them stocks. They were laid out on their edge, the clamp or stack would contain up to, or about thirty thousand, at the bottom of ground in between rows of bricks, the firing would be laid, the secret is in the firing and burning. Its got to burn and raise the heat exactly so when its finished burning for two three weeks with the outside of the clamp covered with a layer of clay to retain heat, except the top, when supplied bricks, soft one for inside use, and the good ones for facings. The yard that made the greatest number of bricks and tiles was the local Turkey yard, in the early stages of Bexhill's build up 1890-1920, first it was Jackson and Adams, after that I can't be sure, but I do know a Mr Hyde was the manager, and two young men I know worked, one my brother Tom, and the other was Frank Cooper, good on yer Frank, he got to the top, was our Mayor.

One thing I do know, he knows what a hard days work is, awful wet days, cold days, going home plastered up to the backside and above in the sticky red clay, and the mobile truck piled high, oh they pushed back empty alright, what about pushing to sheds loaded. I last remember Mr Prescott as manager, he and his son opened the builders merchants where M. P. Harris & Co are at present, this would be about 1923-4.

Back about 1885

Our father was then living in the Honnies, and Dentists, well there was none about, let alone the cocaine, he had the flaming tooth ache and the only chance of relief was to see a Doc Willis who lived in Dorset Lodge, when he told the doctor his trouble, Dr Willis said, sit down here, Carey, and out came a pair of a sort of pliers, followed by a bit of gripping and struggling, and out came the tooth, didn't say what he charged. The Scrivens lived in the Millfield, and old Johnny Brooks in Church Farm, he used his horse riding round his farm, that's why they called him Squire, there was plenty of land in those days a field or two would not be missed. (The Dunns were another Old Town family) Old Solly Cramp he was a bricklayer, young Solly has come to his Eighties, well I worked with old Solly, he was a proper character, he played a cornet just for entertainment, and he was good as well. Young Solly told me the old man worked at Acton Farm over Buckholt (farming) you did anything those days, and I believe him, Johnny Brooks kept his hounds in the farm, Church Farm, he used to see the Huntsman riding out dressed in their green jackets, it was after this that the kennels were built at Little Common, our father worked building them, can't think now who the builder was, but Carey Withenden became the kennel man who I knew quite well, but in his old age.

The Hotel Metropole

This was the biggest venture of a hotel, it stood where the putting course is now and faced west, we shall never forget old Freddie Banks, the firm still carries on in name only, but he was the general foreman.



Devonshire Road

The Beach Haven — Sea Road

This was a small hotel built by Johnny Webb, Senior. I now met John's son, he was just as arrogant in his orders. I was a young bricklayer at the time, and I had the work of making it into a Bridge Club about fifty years ago, also my friend Reg Dawes the blacksmith who was with Old Turner the smithy, they got a cafe where the Blacksmith shop used to be in Terminus Avenue.

Mr J. Webb at this time went in for Shire horses, and Old Bob Hammond was the man who looked after them. Webb eventually retired to Etchingham or thereabouts.

The Old Johnny was responsible for laying our Egerton Park, and talk of a Bathing Pool by the Channel View, also a Pier by the old Kursall or bottom Sea Road.

St Barnabas Church

It was now the time for a church in Sea Road, this was to be St Barnabas, and was mainly built of split faced flint boulders built in 1890. It was a common sight to see men on the sea shore, picking up the boulders, some were for splitting, others for grading into two and three inch pieces with a gauge ring for uniform

size, quite a considerable quantity were generally used at the time. Others were broken down for road making, our old chap worked on the church. This work of boulder stoning, gave men a job in winter time, particularly in bad weather, and it was a common sight to see a gang here and there picking up boulders and splitting and sorting out the sizes.

Cement was not used commercially like present time, and we wonder why, and how the walls built with boulders remain so strong, the answer was in the mortar mix, laced with string courses of bricks and corners, they used one part knob lime, blown, one part sand, and two parts grit, this is what made it so hard, this would all be V pointed, usually the following day when the mortar dried up. All houses at this time were built with knob lime and sand, the method would be to make a ring of sand about half cubic yard, and in the middle put a jute bag of knob lime, then pour sufficient water on to it, causing it to blow and run into soft lime. It was a favourite trick an hour before the lunch break to have pie or turnover wrapped in greaseproof and folded into a paper bag make like a rabbit hole in the sand just above the bubbling lime, and pop it in and cover up, in an hour you would have a hot dinner.

The house so built with this mortar was subjected and would not stand up to severe frosty winters, this caused the workmen a loss of pay, through standing off, and inclement weather sometimes for weeks. Winter seemed severe those days apparently, the work more laborious and trying, all brick joints had to be cut out half inch deep and bass broomed down on completion of roof. The brickwork in stages down to ground level would be cement sand filled to match brick, then pointed with putty and cement to display the perpends and bed joints. Holding a five inch wide board with the mix as a patch stuck on, in front of you in one hand all day, can make you ache quite a bit. This was called tuck pointing, and can still be seen in fine and straight lines in black and white.

The First Hotel

The first Hotel to be built, The Granville, the brass handrails at the entrance were always shining, because a lot of people used the Hotel, but the porter did clean and polish it beautifully, first thing in the mornings.

The Sackville

The building was of more modern design, and it was called after the family name of Sackville, it was a long drawn out winter, building it my father said, I do remember after inspecting with George Ravenshaw. He was an early speculator and developer, he took me in for a drink, mind you this would be about fifty seven years ago, there they were, all the Big Wigs with their tots of Whisky and Brandy, with big cigars I did not like to come out with my 1½d. packet of five woodbines, all sitting lush and plush like. I know just after one evening, George Scott a friend of mine, he was a stoker, and it was time to stoke up, I went with him to the boiler, and easy a bag of coal was shovelled in the furnace.

Mr Leal, Vicar

I can recall when I was four years old, Old Mr Leal, the Vicar of St Stevens Church coming to the door, me following my mum, he had a basket, and took out $\frac{1}{4}$ tea and $\frac{1}{2}$ butter, and he said, there you are. I've got some more houses to go to yet, its not much but it'll be a help, and it was by all accounts.

I remember mum saying to me, I was only about four, go in there, that was Pilbeams the butchers and get 3d. of meat bones, we had some lovely meals. Well, Bexhill took on a boom time in the 1880-90, what with the railways, I think our old dad must have worked on most of the main buildings on the Crowhurst viaducts, and the Town Hall as well as his father was a peace worker, built them adjoining the Town Hall of which I can tell you little.

The Town Hall

When our father worked there, they had a Clerk of Works, naturally, at the Town Hall, and for plastering they would dig a pit about two feet deep by four feet by ten, and in this they would tip bags of knob lime into, then buckets of water, enough to blow or run the lime to putty.

This was dug right in line to the Bog House, inadvertently and a plank was thrown down to cross it, but it was all rickety rackety, and the Clerk went to go over it, over balanced, and finished up head first in the lime, and came out like a snow man in his best suit.

Stone mason Mr Vennals

This work at the Town Hall was all completed by Mr Venables, and a good tradesman he was, this shows up in his work, for he built after the Town Hall, the three houses Nos. 1-2 and 3 at little Common Road, when I pass by, I never fail to look up and see his work, stone quoins and moulded arch lintels. At the Town Hall, (Builder was Mr Thomas). All the brickwork before it was pointed, had to be scrubbed down with spirits of salts.

The piece of land where Col. Lane's statue now stands was used before as a vegetable garden with a hedge and fence around it, and entrance opposite the Bijou, this was the first talkie Picture House controlled by a Mr Ash. There was also the Gaiety Picture House in London Road, there's a garage there now. The skating rink and Post Office were up Buckhurst Road.

Fire Engine

Yes I remember the days, two horses pulled, I ought to say raced with the fire engine, it was to me like a milk cart with a big churn in the middle for a tank. And when the maroon (rocket) went off they used to set it off outside the north side of Town Hall, they put it in a drain pipe standing up, and it would not matter where the lads (firemen) were working, they would instantly drop their tools, on their bikes, and dash off, half a crown was half a crown in those days for a call out.

Yes it was drawn by two dairy grey horses and I could only describe, it looked like an old milk float with churn in centre, that's my memory of it. They used to keep the horses in Sackville mews.

Stable Fire

It was about 1920, when about up to ten horses were kept in stables, rear of London Road, and fire destroyed all water supplies was not always available, that the old ponds came handy. Our memory takes us back to some of the old Fire Brigade, and their first motorised vehicles with them all clinging on the engine dashing off to a fire, warning bell clanging, and their brass helmets shining, gone before the rocket has time to explode, and their first engine was called Lord Buckhurst.

Lady Dianna No 2 was a much improved fire engine, and served them well, and I would add, was kept and looked after by Mr Russell of Russells Garage in London Road (Station Road to me). Lady Kitty, No 3 was at the time thought to be the perfect engine, what we do know, we had the best Firemen, for when the competitions were held in the French town of Calais, our Jim Stephens beat them all. Here's a few of them, Fred and (Jim Stevens, chief) Fred and Bert Wise, Lou Angel, George Pratt, Bill Durrant, Thos Pratt, Jim Clifton, Swain, Bill Mott, Gus Ferrell, Mark Dennett, Ted Crocket, Hood, all had to run, or on their bikes to get to the Fire station, none of that now thank goodness, its better for everyone, the ultimate in Fire Service. There was young Hoad the fireman acted as model for statue, of unfortunate Wise who died fire fighting as seen in Bexhill Cemetery.

Another big fire was in St Leonards Road, Ascots Bakery, our Jethro would not have known.

Up at Sidley

I flew, and was a member of the Homing Club at this time, there was old Mark Vitler, his sons, Puggy, Good Boy and Sidney, and when it came to races, like Scotland to Bexhill, he would always win.

Why was that, well, it was let out afterwards that Old Mark he knew the keeper of a man's pigeons, these were flown from the Grannery in the bottom of Burnt House, the coops could be seen only a few years ago, and his name was Mr Oliver. He is reputed to be the first man to fly a pigeon across the sea from France. Well, Mark got a couple of eggs and his White Flight was bred down from these, it used to pull quite a crowd to see his bird come over the walls at the bottom of the Cricket field into Mark's garden loft. Then there was old Jerkham Morris, postman-come-pigeon flyer, old Latchetts (Charlie Dootner) and little old Nigger Wilson, next to the Sussex Hotel, in the two thatched cottages, Councillor Buxton in the Sussex, they named the Buxton Drive after him.

Old Tom Bodle in Burnt House, can't forget him, Bodle Crescent, and our earlier Councillor and Mayor, Paton — Paton Road.

I would dare to say that Adam's brickyard made and supplied most of the bricks to build most houses in Sidley, and coalyard owned by them, I remember the young crippled chap that worked in the wooden hut that was the coal office, I think they could have had a yard since early days, perhaps since Sea Road dump.

Sidley's got a Church — (now complete)

Yes, it would be just about fifty years ago, the new All Saints church was built, my best recollection about it was that Darkie Parsons had the job of sawing up all the sand stone into blocks.

At night time he would spend time in the New Inn drinking the good beer putting back the loss of sweat and toil of days' labour. It was thirsty work building churches. I can't leave out Sidley's Jack Marchant. I know Jack has taken no medals for what he has done for the people of Sidley, but he's claimed as Mayor, and rightly so, they now have a jolly good Community Centre. Old Mr Christmas had a farm at Sidley, it used to be **Glovers**.

Sidley

It was 1919 when Mr Earl the bakers roundsman came around pushing his two wheel bread box cart delivering the bread.

I'm going to start on my own Missus, can I have your custom please. And from that day never looked back, now –Sidley's got a big new bakehouse.

You must know Mrs Burt Earl, Sen. Why its old Jesse Motts' daughter, Dot.

Pankhurst Mill was a landmark for Sidley, Road named after it. Pankhurst Road, not allowed to be forgotten.

I feel sure this one and the Water Mill had had their day when the new Down Mill was Constructed 1835.

Houses and Barges

It was towards the end of last century when the Coastal Barges plied their trade, particularly out from Lewes, along the coastal districts. One of those which he saw go down was the ship Oceania, and at the time there were no houses along the Sea Front, and a gentleman built a house to its memory, and he called it "Oceania", there has never been a better looking house to this day, when I walk by I instinctively have a good look, and think.

Then there was the time when the barge called The Lewes Lass, pride of the Lewes River, she went down, the old man saw her go, but they saved her figure of Lass on masthead, this was erected on the row of cottages in Sidley, Ninfield Road, named after her, Lewes Lass Cottages.

Smuggling or Looting and pinching

What would one think about this, there were lots of easy pickens from ships and barges dashed ashore in storm, battered seas, particularly when goods were carried by boat, the latter 18th and early part of the 19th century, there were more coastguards than policemen. A row of cottages by what is now the De La Warr pavilion, and a row at Galley Hill, and the look out post at Cooden. When a boat got washed ashore, and cargo got washed out, the boys were there, if they didn't get chased away, Like old Jesse Mott would tell me, had to run like hell on more than one occasion, to me they were only pinching the stuff, it came in handy in those skin flint days, it has altered with the coming of the railway goods train, past history tells us of the wrecks that happened in the winter time.

Sixty Year Back

It was sixty years ago, I worked with my Father, they had finished with horses and stables at the Bell Hotel, and decided to make them into garages that was something new, not many about, this work was done for Woolly, they were the Heating Engineers in the Old Town then, and the manager was old Teddy

Keeball, James Rogers was going great guns at the time (Building Contractors) Jack Sheppard (still with us) he was the gardner at the Manor House, Old Town. Jim Winborne was the Blacksmith, always ready for his pint when the Bell clock struck 11 o'clock, off with his leather apron, and he was gone. I remember my first taste of beer, it was a Saturday, Oh yes, we used to work Saturday mornings and when we finished at 12 o'clock, not before, Ted Keeball took the old man, I followed with all my incentive, he gave him a pint, and said what about the boy, next I knew it was a half pint of Burton, such a lot to drink, didn't know why. I went into the Bell recently, bought half a pint, was charged 31p. I can recall when it was only 2s. 8d. a gallon, why that's just over thirty six times more, paid then. Ted Bourner was the watch repairer at Shindlers, the Jewellers. There used to be a walnut tree just around the corner past the clock, my brother remembers it well. The German Band would play there, and the boys would suck lemons in front of them hoping to put them off, so our father said. Cave Austins were the grocers then, but they had a big fire, I think it closed them up.

Garages

This was all new to me and my father, having to change over from horses, caused him to talk about the first motor cars that came on the roads of Bexhill years earlier.

They would carry a red flag in the front of them to warn their on-coming. After all, everyone was used to the galloping hoofs of horses and carts not a self propelled vehicle.

Butchers — Old Town

Pococks the Butchers and slaughterers had their slaughter house at the rear, they used to supply all the local butchers with fresh meat, when I was a boy, we used to join in the drive of cattle, when they reached this part of their journey, they'd drive them from Pevensey Marsh, Hailsham and Battle markets, also the surrounding farms. The drovers were old Darkie, and old Up the Road, we'd say, a Mr Basset, instead of keeping them on the straight road, we would purposely drive them up a side street, just to hear them swear all the more, it was not unusual for old Darkie to have a drove of twenty bullocks. Old Harry Allen, at that time was the slaughter-man and young Croft was his assistant, it was not a pleasant sight to watch at work, but no one thought any different in those days, thank heaven things are more humane today. Talking to Mr Pocock jun. recently, he was very happy to talk to some one who could recall those days of sixty five years ago.

Boulder Walls — in Old Town

One old bricklayer I worked with in the Old Town was old Darkie Jack Barker, he liked all the old brickies wore a bowler hat, and he used to chew twist tobacco, like a lot of them did, he must have been quite seventy years old, we had a couple of weeks up the Old Town repairing the boulder walls, where you went on to the Blacksmiths, and next to the Grange. He was alright to me but I thought he was a dirty old man in his habits, he would spit all over the pug and say "that'll tone it down". I have looked recently, he's quite right, after sixty years, you can't tell the difference. It was damaged mainly at the entrance, where the horses or carts would pull into the old blacksmiths forge. It was a women's convalescent home opposite.

Mr Green — Motor Engineer

These were still pioneering days, and Mr Green ran the small Garage at the bottom of Victoria Road, Bexhill.

He invented, and made an improved petrol engine for aircraft, which was quite something in those early days of flying, old crates you would say now, but thrilling to the men who flew them. Mr Green really made a good name for himself.

This aircraft engine went on display at the London Exhibition of early inventions, and as far as I am aware is still on display of early models. I won't forget him because when he had finished with the Garage, nearly sixty years ago, old Bill Errey and myself built the flat above, a very cold winter.

Doctors

Some early doctors. There was Drs Rainer, Murdock, Weston (School MO), Stoakes, Andrews, not forgetting Nurse Harris, who delivered over 2,000 babies. Dr Raines had a clinic over the Castle Hotel, you did not hear of anyone retiring in those days, they either worked till they couldn't work any longer, or fell ill, then it was the only thing, Battle Workhouse, then Union, now Battle Hospital. In early days, no Chemists, ointments and powders got from Hastings, the firm of David Stott and Sons Ltd. They were well known locally, and their brand of Festings 40 ointment was widely used 1½d. a tin at all corner stores, ask the old ones, they'll tell you its still the best, but you can't buy now, they are finished, I have it made up once in a blue moon.

The Horse Ambulance — 1912

When we were children, there happened to be an epidemic of Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria. The Health Officers at the time were named Mr Flint and Mr Stone. The Sanitorium was then up at Clinch Green passed the Bexhill Cemetery, and along came a special Horse Cab and the coachman was Bunny Oliver, (two foot Oliver's father). That was the ambulance in those days.

When the railway was built, old Mr Cane would control the registrar of births, deaths and marriages, it was his job to take the silly ones to the Hellingly Hospital, mental, and if they were a bit obstreperous, my old man would go with him, anything for a shilling. Remember Shoesmith from Amhurst Road and Mr Hines were two that went.

Ore Power Station

It was sixty years ago in the pigeon club. We used to have our weekly Sunday Mornings in a chicken hut, it was at Reedley, back of Woodgate. A poultry farm run by a Mr Andrews. Old Percy Curtis was Secretary. A bricklayer in his younger days. I was fourteen then, he said to me, what are you doing boy, bricklaying with my father I said. Hope you don't have to do the things your father and I did, what I said to him, I would call for father six o'clock in the morning, walk to Ore Power station (building it) work ten hours a day, then walk back home again, get in half past six. Four pence half penny an hour (old money). That was from Springfield Road to Ore, Hastings. Today's people would think twice taking a bus.



These mansions were founded by Sir John Roberts for members employed in the Drapery and Allied trade. My old chap worked there the whole time. It was opened in 1903.

What a bad winter it was, for thirteen weeks it froze every night and morning.

The lime mortar would freeze hard, and it was no work. Worst of all, there was no pay, times were bad. The East wind blew the whole time, a bad winter.

Well Water Supplies Supplies Only

It was the time when the houses had wells, same as when our grandfather built them, those by the Town Hall, what is now the British Legion, and adjoining they all had wells.

The Old Well Sinker and Postman

This chap would walk in across the fields from Battle, he would bring with him any mail for Sidley, and area, go well sinking all day, then he'd pick up any mail to go, and walk back about four thirty to Battle. This was at Grange Court School, building it for Councillor Bond.

Well Sinking

This is an old art that has gone out with the times, but it was nice to know how they did it, so I will explain. This is a two man job, always they would have a spare winch and rope. The well would be approximately three feet in diameter, or two foot nine inches radial circle. One would dig down to as deep as a man could reach up absolutely in a true circle. The winch would now be set up, he would also use it as a plumb line, it was essential for the well to be nice and perpendicular, no bends in wall of well. Normally the earth would be spread on site, after the first depth was excavated, the brick steaming would start. It sounds silly to say start bricking the well at the top, but that's how it was done. About seven feet down base, nice and level bricks laid round on edge against the circle of earth, row after row, the back edges of the bricks wedged tight with pebbles, till top is reached. The pressure in the circle against the earth keeps them in their place, then you proceed as before till the water drives you out, the chap at the top attends to the sinker, operating the trug and rope winch, finally weathering the winch and well head, all brick laid dry, no mortar used.

George Sargent Braggs Farm

Yes we all knew Gaddy Sargent, that's what they called him, he farmed Braggs Farm, Braggs Lane, now Eastwood Road. Photo inset, kindly lent by his daughter Nova. (Mrs Harold Smith of Little Common). He was a go get ahead man.

Not only for himself, but his country. During the first World War, he negotiated supplies of beef for the British Government in Canada. He would get a job done, however difficult, not bad for a little Bexhill farmer. Still not content, he looked at the possibilities in Western Australia, and a fine achievement of his was to be the first ever to export back to London, the first shipload of lamb, he personally supervised the load of lamb carcasses at the port of Fremantle Western Australia.

He ran his own slaughter house and butchers in Hooe. He played a key roll in the establishment of the abattoir at Langley near Eastbourne.

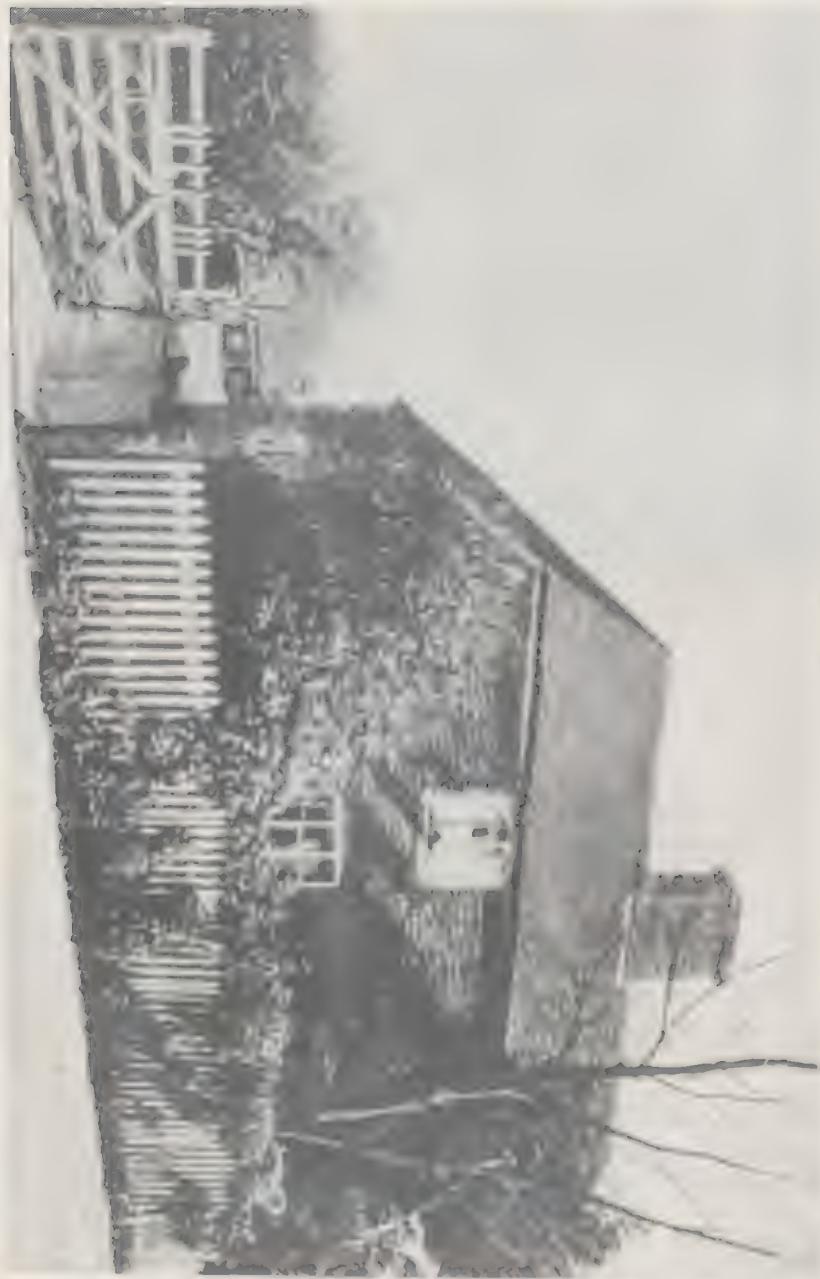
It was his vast experience in this business that took him to the top of his job. He had his own slaughter house from the start at Braggs farm. I can see it now in my minds eye, and Joe Lenard the slaughter man working. The house was a small building set on the side of the railway line going to Crowhurst. The line ran east side of what is now Downlands Avenue.

Gaddy was a crack shot at clay pigeon shooting. He was not satisfied in harvesting his own fields, but wanted more for his country in other lands. That's why he was so popular.

Going on 1914-17

I should like to recall this year, because I saw the Horse Artillery charging around the Bexhill Downs drawing their guns around the riding track.

Also the South Cliff at this time was all open fields, there was only one pair of houses at the Cooden end of the Drive, a Mr Berry lived in one, and old Jack Playford in the other, he was the road man for the De La Warr estate of course the roads were only made up of flint. The Canadians were in camp at Cooden, so all the South Cliff was turned into a training ground, and to this the whole area was dug into trenches quite six feet deep, so as to form a battle ground. Then the



Branes Farm



Gaddy and Jack Ellis' helper

Leave Western Australia for Japan
Exported by Mr. G. S. SAWYER,
November 1, 1922.



actions would take place at night, it was a sight worth seeing, the place would be alive.

Their hand grenades being thrown, bullets hissing and crackling, verey lights bringing daylight from darkness, and you bet your life I and the boys were there next morning looking for cordite gun powder and blank cartridges. I still got the marks to show for it.

1922, 23, 24 and 25

That was the time when George Ravenshear was an early speculator, he got around the Cliff quite a bit, and Charlie Tickner was his handy man. The principle architect at the time, and he used to walk everywhere he went, was a Mr Jack Maynard, grandfather of the present surveyor. The Cooden Drive was just an old track of a so called road, we'd say The Tram Track. You can see the tracks in the photo showing part of Devonshire Road and Vals Library, that's when you had to pay for your books.

Bricklayers who built Bexhill-on-Sea

Some before 1890–1910 and still going 1922.

I was just old enough to know, and had the pleasure to work with most of the men who spent their life working to build the main parts of the town as we know it today. Jack (Darkie) Barker, Ben Barker, Ben Gasson, Bill Errey, Bill Farnfield (Totter) (Mowie) Tom Bristow, Bill Harris, Harry Trueluck, Charlie Tasker, Bill Duke, Ben Carey, (Uncle) Tom Carey, Peter Carey (Father), Freddie Banks, Dergen Ranson, Jesse Offen, Harry Benge, Jimmy James, Dave Catt, Frank Catt, Bill Seymour, Jo Tarry (Foreman Bexhill Hospital) Harry Hobbs (Foreman Secondary School) Shoesmith Harry, Solly Cramp, Jo Humphrey (Forman for MacCormak) and Bert Leaves, Percy Curtis and Joe Clifton.

Some of the Builders

It was quite a joke when the builders were building Sutherland Avenue houses. They were the coloured builders, a Mr White, name still trading, Mr Brown, and Mr Green.

Johnny Webb he done everything, including park layout, concrete blocks and housings, he built the Beach Haven Hotel, Mr Thomas, who built the Town Hall, and along came the Greed Brothers, William, Walter, Levi and Honest John, there could be more I don't know. It was Knowles and Son who built first Council houses.

Since the First World War

MacCormak, H. P. Farnfield, Strange & Sons, Cave and Brooks, James Rogers Compton & Pitman, James Bodle, and Parker. These were the employers of up to one hundred men each, at least some of them.

I worked for Councillor Harry Cocket, he tried to have a go, was a good carpenter in his day, he would not trouble to take a hand cart to push a flight of stairs to the job, he would carry them on his back. Old Dick Saxby was his other carpenter.

Old Harry would go to a council meeting, come back looking down in the dumps and my old chap on one occasion said to him, what's the matter Harry, he

replied by a wave of fist and spit in vengence, and say damn and buggerumm, they make me cry tears of blood. (after a council meeting). Ben Eastwood and young brother Charlie were up and coming at the time. There used to be Harry Weeler, Bill Miller, George White, Bill Knowles, Ted Crawshaw, Levi Greed, all joiners and carpenters. Cornelious were the Coach Builders in the passage way to Parkhurst Road, also a Cab and Horse Carriage kept in Western Road, and Paine Rogers, Fruit and Vegetable Wholesalers.

The Main Contractor Roads and Sewers

I cannot leave out Stephen Carey, no relation, he was a good man to our Town, he made roads, he put in main sewers, he put in our main water supply, and by gosh how the men worked in those days, no machines like today, just a steam roller, and plenty of pick and spade and shovel.

Men digging a trench of considerable length in a line, each would have a certain piece each, say twelve foot long to dig, and it would deepen as though they all dug together.

The beach was pulled from Veness Gap at South Cliff. We'd say Carey's beach hole, it took two horses to pull a cubic yard out from there, then one cart horse and tip cart to deliver it. George Shoesmith, Belle Hill was the other cart contractor.

And I must not forget one of the first workmen to join Stephen Carey it was Mr Whybourne, when he first started, I did not realise this, but young Whybourne same age as myself, Well I saw him today, full of pain. what would one expect, it was his job to shovel up a yard, or tonne of beach, chuck it up into the cart down at the beach hole (Veness Gap) each time an order came in for a cubic yard of various beach, he sweat alright, wet or fine, all for thirty five shillings a week, he was lucky to have a full time job and an existence wage.

It was Stephen Carey who put most of the sewers in, one big route of drains, and since all the development carried out, they have added to it, like the fibrous roots and over burdened the town. There should have been a drain tax on new development, the speculators have come and gone with fortunes, no good to the town. French and Sons were the firm that laid the last main sewers from outfall to Sidley in 1928 nigh on fifty feet deep by and around the Bexhill Station. All done with pick, shovel, spade and sweat.

Shop Traders — First War Period

Grocers, Wickens, Maypole, Home and Colonial, Devonshire Road, Hunters, International, Hudsons, Cave Austins, in Old Town.

Ironmongery, Hodgekinson, French, Springs, and oil stores (Harry Hoad) in Buckhurst Place.

Pubs, The Devonshire, Devonshire Road, The Queens, Belle Hill, The York, Station Road, The Castle, Buckhurst Place, The Metropole, The Sackville, The Normanhurst, and the Bell at Sidley, The Pelham, The New Inn, The Sussex.

Occupations

Mainly the mainstay of the Town was building works. The larger houses employed gardeners full time, and smaller houses employed part-time. Most private houses employed one, two and three domestic servants, mostly engaged to

live in, and paid by the month.

Each grocer at this period would have a full round, and representative. He would collect the orders, and these would be delivered by the errand boy, or van man, horse and van. I remember old Freeman delivering Hunters grocery van, old Fred Murrell with horse and van, taking the bread round, and bakers, there were Arscots, Jewhursts, Thompsons, and Denmans.

Butchers

We know Pococks to be the oldest established in the Old Town, for it was they who supplied all the fresh meat, I well remember the posh butcher of the day, Harold Carter in Devonshire Road. They delivered all their meat in time for that days lunch pronto, and never late, he was a devoted churchman, he run the chapel in Station Road, (now Red Cross). He had for delivery a fast trotting pony and a kind of two wheeled trap with a box, a flat box under the driving seat with a drop flat lid at the back, the driver was dressed in a nice blue smock, what a wonderful service. Then there were Offens, Town Hall Square, never tasted pork sausages like his good ones since he's been gone. Waghorns of Western Road, and Baileys. Then Pilbeams, Belle Hill, now Viking Fish Shop. I think the two young Pilbeams went to Pashley Farm. The others retired and finished their days, except the young Pococks, and the one who lives at Hooe, so delighted when we talk about the drovers, old Bassett, we'd say Up the Road, or all he could say, then old Darkie, with beard and long stick driving the cattle herd, and making for the Old Town Pococks slaughter house.

Harry Allen was the slaughter man at the time, and young Harold Croft was his assistant.

Pococks then, had at that time a very up-to-date Ford truck, and Crofty, well he would drive, one of the old timers, we would call a Tin Lissie, with the lever accelerator on the steering column. I would go with him for the ride, but had to be careful you didn't burn your boots, because the exhaust would get very red hot, and the passenger did sit over the top of it.

Going up Chantry Hill it would be a toss up if we got to the top or run backwards or was set on fire. This would be about nineteen twenty.

Blacksmiths

Just before or a few years before the last war, there were still quite a lot of horses, carting and riding about, and the Blacksmiths were thriving and busy, what with horses and connected with building works. There was Old Turner and Reg Dawes, always busy in their blacksmiths shop end of Terminus by Sackville arch, and George Dennett, Victoria Road.

Ted Crocker in Little Common, not forgetting the Pond, Tommy Tuckers Shop built there now, Fred Barker, he had his forge off London Road, it's still there, ask old Fred to do a job, and he'd have a good moan, but he got it done for you. And there was your Jimmy Winbourn in the Old Town, next to the house called The Grange, he had to have his pint at opening time. Always in a hurry, horses or doing up steel chisels, and Nick Catt up at Sidley, he had all the horse and farm trade in the surrounding district, which was quite considerable.

They all appeared very busy, whenever one called in, which they were, but they nearly always managed a small job for one and on the spot there and then. Not like today, go to a garage, and they more or less have to book you in and take

your turn.

A horse can't keep trotting about with a loose or worn shoe, must be done right away.

Removals

It was old Solomon Sargent, who had the Removal business, with his pantechicons and car horses, he said to my dad (I just remember) well Ben, its haying time, gotta find feed for the horses, well my old chap with a sickle and scythe, he cut the meadows from the Denbigh Hotel down to the Sutherland corner, remember my sister Nellie dragging me up there with his sandwiches and bottle of cold tea for dinner. Ask anyone to do it now, they'd say you were bonkers, silly, crackers.

East Parade

We have heard so much of this part of the seaside, I can only recall the bits my father has told me.

When they made the parade, the cement would come in Jute sacks eleven to the ton. The Navvies came from all over the place. Five Hundred of them worked on the project, practically everything had to be man handled. No concrete mixers then.

There was one man well known to all of them then, I used to take all with a pinch of salt, until I worked with men old enough to be my father, one was old Albert Hoad from Sidley, he was a bit religious, but honest old boy. He said to me, you wouldn't have known your Uncle Jim would you, no I said, because he got killed building Sackville Road, well he said, he was the strongest man he ever knew, and there were plenty of strong navvies about. One day he was working on the Parade, he came from the cement dump carrying a sack of cement on his shoulders, and a bag under each arm to the mixing base, they looked in amazement, and said to him, you couldn't carry any more could you, oh yes he said, oh no you couldn't they said, still standing with six hundred of cement about him, he replied, you put another bag of cement on top of the one on my shoulders, I'll bet you a sovereign I'll carry it, there were no takers, they knew Jim Dyer. He lived in the old Black Cottages, Black Lane, Sidley and Aunt Charlotte, now Grovers Lane.

Frank Spray

Frank the Crank, that's what we'd say, but it was all wrong. He was a gifted man, you would only come across one in a million, like Frank. He had the gift of concentration and manipulation, his sole purpose was one's welfare, disregarding payment. One friend of mine had been in awful pain day after day, it lead to weeks, I said to him, what about Frank, what that Crank he muttered, well I'll try him, I can only lose a quid.

A few days afterwards I saw him, smiling and I enquired how are you, did you see him, meaning Frank.

Yes he said it was the best bloody quid I've spent. Well Frank boasted he could, if anyone was suffereing badly with cataracts, lick them out and then spit them out.

Today they have expensive machines costing £30,000 to wash them out. Frank did it for a few bob. Remember this was only fifty years ago. He was so noted at this time, he did have a girl assistant for women called Alice, and a Sunday Newspaper followed up with a very nice story praising his powers.

Mr Green

Mr Green was a Motor Engineer with a small garage or workshop in Victoria Road, was clever enough to design one of the first air-plane engines.

This was put on exhibition, may be still in a London Exhibit Hall.

Mr Hilder

He was the man who we relied on for all our mineral waters and soft drinks. He was a clever old stick, a mate of Mr Green at the same time, about fifty years ago.

The Lost Cemetery

To my mind this must have been the first burial ground, covering the Bexleigh area down to the Salts and St Leonards, and the Bulverhythe Church, it was called, built hundreds of years ago with just an old remaining part of wall left, built exactly as described earlier, but seems to have been forgotten and neglected.

A housing estate has been built over this old Cemetery, with little thought to its contents. Most probably our descendants could be some of King Harold's men buried in field before Church. Well the saying is Time is the biggest healer, so we just forget the past, or nearly.

Barrack Road Cemetery

Are they going to forget this sacred ground, we know the descendants here, aged parents, grandparents have gone. No one tended the graves. Will it suffer the same fate, it does not alter the fact that some of our best and well known men lie peacefully there, including our grandparents.

Parish Church Cemetery

Naturally space is very limited, or was, and is not used as such, we now have our more orderly and organised cemetery, applied to the growth of the town at Clinch Green. But who knows, in a few hundred years, it may only be a memory, as the first one is, as a matter of fact, the first stage of this layout, the following generations are slowly forgetting, and passing on, but I can't see this happening, unless cremation fully taken its place.

Amusements

There is one name our town cannot forget, and that is Frank Davis and Granny Davis, daughter Lucy is still with us, knocking on for a century.

Now old Frank he was the man who had the lovely old Herdy Gerdy and swings with all the side-shows.

And what a pleasant sight it was from each horse and rooster, there was a corrugated brass tube going to the height of the top circle and very highly polished, this in motion, and the steam driven organ playing is something our generation would not know, how unfortunate. The only lighting was by paraffin flares, these consisted of a brass container with a tap under for control of the flame.

Frank Davis

It would then have about four feet of brass tube being turned at the last twelve inches, in a semi-circle, and the tube would be quarter inch in diameter, the flame would spurt out by the control of the tap, to the required flare, and would light up the whole fair. Coconut stand always three rows of coconuts at different heights. Same with sideshows, good prizes to be got. The swings was really a man's job to swing them. Six swings set in a straight line, well erected and pretty to see. The pull ropes were spaced apart with a fur hand-grip to operate the ropes were crossed to each other, two of you in the swing, after a push you each in turn pulled like mad, you never went over the top but some went close to it. It would be too dangerous, accidents there were, but what fun, and so cheap, all the fun of the fair. The attendant would stop the swing by using a long piece of flat timber rested one end of frame and he would lift the other so it would drag the bottom of swing. They came right close to us one year 1913 in Eastwoods field just about where Gardeners the Book people are. Other times opposite The Down School Little Common Road.

Old Frank had three sons, Frank, Billy and George.

The townspeople will remember his brother who had the antique shop in Western Road. Jo and his son, same again, bottom of Belle Hill. Jo everyone knows Jo his son, he had the garage in later years. Old Frank he had the scrap yard in Station Road, mostly metal scrap now.

The most striking thing to me is, and I remember his daughter Lucy would stand in the yard all day long sorting out all the rags, now to me her grandson Terry is a very nice lad, she would be very proud of him, because he's had the distinction of being the best dressed young man in town, I must agree, the two opposites in this instance.

The other old rag and bone man was Old Bartlett with sack on arm going his round would sing or make a noise like it, singing rags bottles or bones.

The Denbigh Hotel

This Public House was on the west bend of the hill, and one could take their drink to the tables on the front lawn, and from there you could get a good view overlooking Bexhill town, and very jovial and sporting landlords they had over the years.

The Thatched House

It was in the early thirties when a certain Mr Sainsbury had a lovely house and cottage built, they called this area eventually Pinewood.

The builder for this was a very good post first war builder called H. R. Farmfield. I knew old Percy in his retiring years with his white beard and good manners. He was so pleased to talk about his past jobs, really delighted, and particularly proud in doing Mr Sainsbury's house, he told me his contract was for the sum of £17,000 a lot of money then, no doubt the biggest single house contract he had made, and as Mr Sainsbury's motto and standard was to have the best he had the house and grounds landscaped beautifully, the old existing footpath leading Church Hill, he had made into a small road, and this he had lined each side with lovely rhododendrons, cost him another £1,000. Mr Osbourne the head gardener lived in the cottage, plus his other two or three gardeners from outside.

Young Bill Leaory was chauffeur (still about). How the old gentleman enjoyed himself in his retirement.

He was a good benefactor to the Village, and the part he played in getting the Community Centre, on a fine day he would have his morning walk down the hill, through the Village up and around the Collington Lane, and getting to our cottage would have a rest, by the garden wall, and chat to the wife, only a few feet away, in the bay window, they always saw eye to eye on charitable things, he not always with some.

He often repeated with great delight his younger days as a lad he helped his father, this was in London, his first shop, his dad had a carrier bike, his old chap would give him two shillings and sixpence a week, that made him smile telling us that he was the errand boy.

Well the old feller, time and age caught up with him, he could not do his walks, suppose he could see himself in the road mirror going back up the footpath, back to home. Sadly he ended his days in a London nursing home, and sadly a bad loss to the Village. He was such a gentleman, he would raise his hat to a gipsy.

John Sangers Circus

This was a circus that toured the South Coast in early summer each year. It would concentrate and erect the big top, where we would say in Morley's field. They had a market garden, also a nice meadow. This would be the north side of the Down's School, where King Offa School is now sited.

This was in my young childhood days about five years of age. It was the time of age when you would be noting things, and the Big World about you.

I know just after this, they made him Lord John Sanger, for his service to the public. I beleive he was the first man of entertainments to receive this honour.

Well, the morning would arrive when the travelling circus was due, and motor cars and transport were never heard of or even ever seen. The first clickety klomp would be heard about five o'clock in the morning, I would be dead asleep naturally, and the poor animals would have to plod the road, it would be from East bourne to Morley's field, quite a trot.

I would be awakened that early hour by spots of water dropped into my sleepy eyes, and a shrug or good shake by my father, he would be excited, and so would I by the time I had awaken to the clatter, I would hear him say wake up the circus is coming by.

First it would be two horses pulling a flat top four wheeled cart, then one lot after another, I wondered why, I afterwards knew they carried tents and what one would call stables to house the performing horses and ponies.

Then would come along the waggons that housed the performing animals such as lions, tigers, sea lions, monkeys and different sorts of animals because after a performance they held a menageree, and this was quite a show in itself.

Well at this time of the morning, we could have a good look at most of the animals because ours is a long straight road.

After the waggons had passed, it would be the horses and ponies, these would be tied loosely by rope from one to the other, from a rope halter, just enough to keep them together.

They also had a performing bear, he was very popular with the children especially to see a real bear.

How pretty they were, there were cream horses, brown ones, black ones, and pie balled. No heavy horses, only light heavy that pulled the carts.

Of course, a big item for the circus folk was not to take or tire the animals too much on journeys from town to town, all feed, hay and oats had to be carried so as to be ready on arrival next show ground.

Apart from the circus folk's caravans, these were very good, also pretty, nothing like this generation have seen today. Proper old gipsy types, wonderful panels, scrolls and picked out with coloured paints and varnished, some with round tops, windows and stable type doors, some with painted wheels. The good performers, you could tell, they had nice caravans, others not so good, but there was nothing shabby about them, I would say much more cosy and snug than some of the modern drafty houses of today, all tucked in with a little cooking stove, half door open and the window in summer time. You could see the circus goers walking around staring at the caravans and the people in them, that was quite amusing in itself. Of course, the big Elephants, they're the ones we wanted to see, each one holding the trunk to the front one's tail, and the little Indian trainer walking alongside them, giving his word of command. One year they decided to go in Daniel Meyers pond, and have a good drink and a splash, they'd give you a bath if you didn't watch out. Our treat came on opening day, we scraped together a few coppers, and in we went.

Betram Mills Circus, 1936 was the time they erected their Big Top on the lower football pitch on Bexhill Downs.

One year when they held their circus at Hastings, the bear trainer was hugged to death.

The Landed Gentry

The most notable men in my fathers day were The Egertons, The Brasseys, The Sackvilles, Johnny Webb Sen., The Brookes Sen. The Dunns, De-La-Warr, The Walkers. In the late twenties, it was fun to be in the company of jolly Captain Dunn. All these men did the town very well. Their names will be remembered for ever by the streets, roads and places named after them.

But how they acquired such vast acres of land, in our peasant and backward days is a mystery.

I wondered if they played noughts and crosses on the old maps on bygone days.

Cooden Mount

William Young and Sons were Iron & Steel Engineers. Mr Young came to Bexhill and erected the Iron Railway Bridges, that spanned the two roads to Bexhill Common. I knew his son Douglas, who told me that his father on a visit while working here, had a walk and so admired the view across Pevensey Bay, bought the land and had this lovely house built.



Bertram Mills Circus

Cooden's Lucky Day

For fifty years, old Harry Benge tended the greens at the Cooden Golf Club, and well he did it. It was his pride and joy, in the last century, where Lill's shop is (Jumbo) it was, afterwards, it was the Cooden coastguard look out, beginning of the century. Later on the Ford Bros had a boat and a black tumble down hut opposite the Cooden Beach Hotel, and there it was at the Hotel. Cooden had some lovely visitors. None other than there Royal Highnesses King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. I had been down shrimping about the year 1935-36, and when I got home the wife said "have you seen the (children)" and I not knowing the Royal Car had passed through the village replied "nobody much. I saw some children at a distance on the beach." Well she said it could have been the two lovely young Princesses. One could walk about in safety then.

We have now come to the year 1982, all things thought impossible have happened. Television, even the space shuttle. To fly travel, what Columbus did in months, days to us. All things have happened in my life time.

But I'm glad my childhood days were in the days of the horses and carts. That I was able to enjoy the pleasure of Granddad Dyer, born one hundred and fifty years ago. He would give me a half penny to buy a big bar of toffee.

Old man Franks in his shop all day, he would then at evening time, take his long rod with hook one end and pull down the lever on the gas posts, and lights would shine. Those were the days.



Copyright © 1983.
All Rights Reserved. This book is Copyright.
Published by Henry Gordon Carey,
23 Little Common Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex.
Printed by: D. C. GRAPHICS, t/o 68 London Road, Bexhill, E. Sussex.

